



3. Strategy Challenges

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3.1 Introduction

In developing a regional transport strategy, there is a wide range of challenges that must be taken into account. This chapter sets out some of the key risks and difficulties facing transport in the GDA. These should be read in the context of the overarching challenge for Dublin and the GDA to maintain and enhance its role as the primary national gateway, which adds an additional layer of requirements to ensure efficient access to Dublin Port and Dublin Airport. Along with a comprehensive policy review, these challenges have fed into the formulation of the Strategy Aim and Strategy Objectives set out in Chapter 5.

3.2 Climate Change

Under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, emissions must reduce by 51% by 2030, setting a path towards a zero net-emissions scenario by 2050. The transport sector is committed to meeting those targets in full. For transport, there are three main actions required, namely:

- Reducing the demand for travel;
- Increasing use of public transport, walking and cycling and a reduction in trips by car; and
- Conversion of the transport fleet to zero emissions vehicles.

“We want to make sure that we provide good public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure, so people are less reliant on their cars, and we can cut congestion. We have already committed to an additional 500,000 public transport and active travel journeys daily by 2035. Policies need to be better aligned to achieve more ambitious targets for modal shift, involving building supporting infrastructures.”

Government of Ireland, 2019 Climate Action Plan

In relation to the first point, the close integration of land use and transport planning will contribute to this aim, particularly in the medium and long term. Additionally, the trends in working from home and online education and retailing may play a significant role.

While the Transport Strategy has addressed these issues fully, a key objective is to address the second point. To this end this report sets out the scale and the strategic-level detail of the investment required to facilitate a reduction in the use of the private car in the GDA over the period to 2042.

Finally, notwithstanding the fact that the conversion of the national transport fleet to low and zero-emissions vehicles is primarily a matter for national level policy and investment

programmes, the Transport Strategy will promote and facilitate this change. All urban public transport vehicles operating State services in the GDA will be zero-emissions by 2035, with this transformation already underway. The NTA is committed to this provision on a national basis. In relation to the private car fleet, the Transport Strategy supports the local authorities in facilitating the roll-out of electric cars through the provision of public charging points where demand requires them.

However, simply transitioning the car fleet to electric vehicles is insufficient to deliver a sustainable transport system and a key focus of the strategy is to facilitate increased use of other modes in order to meet environmental, economic and social objectives related to emissions, congestion and car-dependency. As such, a number of additional measures have been considered in this strategy which will enable these statutory targets to be met. These measures are set out in Chapter 16 – Climate Action Management.

3.3 Recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic

As we move into the final phases of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the debate has shifted to consideration of its potential permanent impacts. There has been a lot of debate about how Covid-19 will permanently alter our way of life; that it may lead to a significant reduction in the daytime population of our large towns and cities as technology facilitates working from home; that the trend towards online retailing will accelerate and that online teaching will become a significant part of school and college life.

At this point in time, the NTA cannot state with certainty how the pandemic will affect our travel plans, or indeed our settlement patterns, in the long-term.

It is our intention, however, to continue to plan for what we believe to be the most environmentally sustainable future. As such, the Transport Strategy proposes the transport system to support the National Planning Framework objectives in relation to consolidation of our towns and cities; it promotes public transport as a major contributor to a zero carbon transport system; and it sets out how we will meet the increased demand for safe and attractive walking and cycling infrastructure.

In relation to the appropriateness and viability of the Transport Strategy in the context of a post-Covid world, the NTA has developed an alternative future demand scenario instead of the “business as usual” approach, which takes account of likely potential travel pattern changes and tests the robustness of the Authority’s projects, plans and programmes. The Alternative Future Demand Scenario has adjusted downwards the likely demand for future travel to account for potential increases in working from home, remote learning and online shopping. Other areas such as a potential decrease in business travel together with an increase in shorter local trips have also been considered. The full details of this scenario are available in the “Alternative Future Scenario for Travel Demand” report available on the NTA website.

This approach provides a spectrum of potential transport patterns against which the Strategy can be validated. The NTA is satisfied that this approach fully accounts for the potential long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in line with the best information available at present.

In terms of the implementation of the Transport Strategy, travel patterns and trends will continue to be constantly monitored by the NTA and our partner agencies, and this information will be used as an input into the planning and design of major transport investment schemes. As the immediate transport impacts of Covid-19 through 2020 and 2021 settle into medium and long-term impacts, the NTA will respond and ensure our monitoring and analysis remains up-to-date.

3.4 Servicing the Legacy Development Patterns

Development patterns in the Greater Dublin Area have historically provided significant challenges to transport provision.

During various phases of growth, development has tended to the periphery; to greenfield lands, remote from existing or proposed transport infrastructure; and at densities too low to support public transport or facilitate walking and cycling. In many cases, development also leapfrogged the urban area to edge of town sites in various settlements across Leinster.

This pattern of growth created a whole new group of highly car-dependent commuters across the region. According to the 2016 Census, 55% of residents of the GDA travel to work by car. This masks spatial variations whereby the figure for those living in the inner suburbs is 47%, but rises to 70% for those outside the Metropolitan Area. Similar patterns are evident for trips to education.

Addressing this legacy, and ensuring it is not compounded, is a major challenge for the Transport Strategy and for the planning authorities.

3.5 Revitalisation of the City Centre and Town Centres

The Covid-19 Pandemic has created significant challenges for Dublin City Centre and for a number of town centres across the region. It has also created a number of opportunities to reduce the amount of travel through, for example, increased home working and blended home/office working and the use of remote working hubs. These are discussed in Chapter 8.

The importance of local services during the pandemic and the importance of access to these services was also highlighted, as concepts such as the “15-Minute City” and a “Town Centres First” approach emerged.

The implementation of the Transport Strategy will need to respond to these challenges by providing higher levels of accessibility by sustainable modes to Dublin City Centre and



other key urban centres; by expanding night-time and off-peak services; and by ensuring that towns and villages across the GDA are provided with safe and convenient cycling and walking facilities.

3.6 Transformation of the Urban Environment

Notwithstanding the progress made in recent years, the urban environments in Dublin City and the Metropolitan towns and villages are still dominated by the requirements to serve movement by private car. Apart from a limited number of high-profile pedestrian areas (primarily in Dublin City Centre) and public parks, there are few, if any, true refuges for pedestrians and cyclists, and there is an absence of coherent priority for public transport. Informal public open spaces and places to relax and sit down are lacking. This has a disproportionate adverse impact on persons with disabilities, the elderly and the socially disadvantaged. The manner in which the urban realm is set out and designed is a key indicator of the social, cultural and environmental health of a city or town.

While actions are underway to address some of these issues, the GDA generally does not currently present a healthy image in this regard. The Transport Strategy, sets out the manner in which this can be addressed in all urban areas in the GDA in three ways:

- Reducing car dominance;
- Improving the public realm; and
- Managing the movement of goods vehicles.

This is based on the recognition of the place function of streets in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets whereby streets themselves are attractive and act as a location for social interaction, rather than as channels for the movement of traffic,

3.7 Ensuring Universal Access

Through the investment in public transport infrastructure and vehicles and by improving the urban environment, the NTA is committed to implementing a Universal Design approach. Universal Design is defined by the National Disability Authority as the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.

Transport is aimed at serving all sectors of society, and people's access to opportunities to work, get an education or partake in other activities should not be compromised by the design of the transport environment or transport vehicles. The Transport Strategy is underpinned by the on-going work of the NTA in improving the interface between the transport system and persons with physical and intellectual disabilities and this thread runs through all of the chapters in Part B of this report.





3.8 Serving Rural Development

While Dublin City and Suburbs and the large regional towns comprise the primary sources of travel demand in the GDA, ensuring that the socio-economic and cultural fabric of rural areas is protected and enhanced is a cornerstone of the Transport Strategy.

The most important actions that can be taken to serve the rural hinterland of the GDA are through the maintenance and improvement of the regional bus system, Local Link and the development of the Inter-Urban and Greenway cycle network, together with the maintenance and improvement of the critical road links that form the transport arteries of rural areas. The Transport Strategy incorporates a suite of measures which supports these items and addresses the mobility needs of the rural parts of the GDA.

3.9 Improving Health and Equality

A good transport network, based on sound foundations of sustainability and accessibility, has the potential to be an engine for positive change. It can do this by opening up access to social and economic opportunities such as education and employment, particularly for those who would otherwise be unable to avail of such opportunities. It can also have a positive impact on overall health and wellbeing among the people and communities that it serves.

- Ensuring that the transport network and services enhance people's quality of life is a considerable challenge, and

these considerations have informed the development of the strategy:

- The affordability of public transport so that it remains available and useful for families with lower disposable incomes;
- The role of public transport in further improving accessibility for persons with disabilities; and
- Promoting active commuting for its benefits to people's health and to the environment.

3.10 Fostering Economic Development

A good, reliable, efficient and affordable transport system can be a major driver of economic activity, jobs, investment and prosperity. We now have the opportunity to re-examine our transport priorities so that the economic benefit can be maximised in the years ahead, in a city and a region that works better for the people who live and visit there in the following ways.

- Improving connectivity to maximise the potential of our labour force;
- Identifying transport investment required to facilitate expansion of jobs and employment;
- Transport as a catalyst for entrepreneurship and innovation;

- Optimising our transport network for the distribution of products and goods to markets;
- Reducing the effects of congestion on the economy and workers; and
- Improving and protecting surface access to Dublin Port and Dublin Airport.

3.11 Delivering Transport Schemes

While the preceding chapter sets out the progress made since the approval of the previous Transport Strategy, it has been clear that the implementation of major transport schemes and projects has been challenging.

It is simply impossible to implement radical improvements to the city and region's transport system without disruption and without discommoding some people, often in significant adverse ways. Some of these effects will be felt locally; others may impact on a whole community; and, in extreme circumstances, the effects may be experienced by a very large population across the region, such as a major change in the city centre, for example. This has been the case with almost all urban transport schemes throughout recent history, all of which have been subject to significant levels of opposition, including Luas, DART, Quality Bus Corridors, minor cycling schemes, the M50, the national Motorway programme, etc.

Extensive engagement with stakeholders, local communities and the wider public is essential to properly inform the public about major transport changes and scheme proposals, and

in order to highlight and reinforce the benefits of transport schemes. That engagement also provides an opportunity to work with those parties to achieve better overall outcomes and to allay unnecessary concerns. A central tenet of the delivery of the proposals in this Transport Strategy will be a process of dialogue and consultation with the relevant parties in the case of each proposal, affording opportunity for more collaborative development of balanced solutions.

